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# Carter's FBI Charter

## Boon to Subversives

"Who's in charge, anyway?" President Carter was merrily chugging along the Mississippi River last week in the *Delta Queen*—Steamboat One, as reporters refer to it—stopping every so often to jog, host a radio talk show, and kiss a ton of babies. This, one supposes, is the new and forceful leadership he was pledging on national television about a month ago. But no one—or, some might say, too many people—seemed to be tending store.

While the President was obviously hugely enjoying himself on his "non-political" cruise, who, one wondered, was taking command for the Administration as the critical problem of the Mideast began to bubble? Andy Young, despite his resignation, which won't take effect until at least the end of the month, was saying one thing; Robert Strauss, Carter's special envoy, another; Secretary of State Cyrus Vance something else. Supposedly both Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski—but not Strauss—were behind a move to propose a new U.N. resolution tilting somewhat toward the Palestinians, but this was suddenly cancelled. Then the word was out that Vice President Mondale was really in charge of working everything out on the Mideast, but only temporarily. Meanwhile, Israel, Egypt and the PLO were issuing threats and pummeling American diplomacy.

But the President appeared quite relaxed in the wake of this chaos, preferring the refuge of Mark Twain's old haunts to the strain of the Oval Office.

"Can Mr. Carter have any idea what all this looks like on the nightly news," asked the *Washington Post*, "when, after a full complement of foreboding and menacing statements issued from the capital, the U.N., and the Middle East, the now familiar ope-like music introduces the President of the United States and tells us how

But the Middle East is only the latest problem the President has bobbled. When Congress returns from the August recess, both the Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.), and the House Judiciary panel, headed by Rep. Peter Rodino (D.-N.J.), will take up legislation that many security experts believe will deal yet another

deadly blow to an already terribly flawed U.S. internal security program: the President's proposed FBI Charter.

Mildly criticized by the American Civil Liberties Union (though that organization greatly shaped the bill's features) and dutifully backed by FBI Director William Webster, the Charter, according to these experts, will pour into legislative concrete language that will dangerously tie the hands of law enforcement officials in cases involving both domestic security and terrorism. While the Bureau's efforts in these areas are currently hampered by guidelines issued in 1976 by then Attorney General Edward Levi, they can be changed by any attorney general who wishes to rewrite them. But the Charter, according to its hardline critics, virtually cements the most harmful aspects of these guidelines into permanent law.

Ray Wannall, who retired in 1976 as

head of the Bureau's intelligence division, after having worked in that division for 29 years, is less than enamored of the new Charter. He bluntly informed us:

"I see no provision which would permit the investigation of a domestic organization of a revolutionary nature. As I see it, the Charter would not permit the investigation of the Socialist Workers party and Progressive Labor [i.e., Marxist-Leninist groups], and could conceivably, he added, even bar a probe of the Communist party."

Moreover, said Wannall, even the gathering of information on many revolutionary groups—as distinct from probing them—would be prohibited. The FBI, he noted, is also being removed from conducting background checks of those being "considered for sensitive positions" in numerous governmental fields, including those

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